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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 28 February 2017, 11.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Yelchenko	(Ukraine)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tumysh
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 24 February 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/170)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.35 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East

Letter dated 24 February 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/170)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2017/172, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2017/170, which contains a letter dated 24 February 2017 from the Permanent Representatives of France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements before the voting.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): For months now, France, the United Kingdom and the United States have sought to unite the Security Council in response to the heinous crimes committed in Syria involving the repeated, corroborated use of chemical weapons against civilians over several years. These criminal acts continue today, as we speak. We must put an end to them.

The stakes involved are extremely serious, above and beyond the situation in Syria. More than a century ago, the world learned with dismay of the horrors of chemical warfare when chlorine gas was first used against civilians on 15 April 1915 in Ypres, Belgium. The international community decided at that time that it was duty-bound to ensure that such atrocities never recur.

The current retrogression is therefore especially terrible. What we once thought impossible is now an imminent danger; what we had once thought to be in the past is happening right now before our very eyes. Prohibited weapons have been used several times in the Syrian conflict, despite that fact that 192 States are committed, through their ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, to never using such weapons again and to destroying their existing stockpiles.

I call on all present to fully grasp the extent of our responsibility today. We face not only the threat of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; we face the repeated, methodical and barbarous use of weapons of mass destruction — in this case, chemical weapons — against civilians. On the scale of threats to international peace and security, we have hit 10. That is why France believes that weakness and inaction are not and cannot be an option. It is why, I recall, that the members of the Security Council, together and unanimously, in September 2013 resolutely decided that

> "in the event of non-compliance with this resolution, including unauthorized transfer of chemical weapons, or any use of chemical weapons by anyone in the Syrian Arab Republic, to impose measures under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter" (*resolution 2118 (2013), para. 21*).

Today we have reached this moment of truth, when it is no longer a matter of evading or looking away. Many instances of the use of chemical weapons have been confirmed and continue to be

reported — very accurately, professionally and methodically. The responsibility of the Syrian regime was established in three of such cases without any ambiguity at all. The Joint Investigative Mechanism has also demonstrated the responsibility of the Da'esh terrorist organization in a case of chemical attack. It is now up to the Security Council, as guardian of our system of collective security, to act and not just talk. It has the duty and the responsibility to do so, as it has committed itself to do. This is a necessity consistent with the establishment of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, on which the Council has reiterated its confidence.

The continuation of the work of the Mechanism, decided unanimously with the adoption of resolution 2319 (2016) last November, has been indispensable. But that cannot delay or supplant a vital action on our part to sanction those who have flouted the prohibition: an action drawing the necessary conclusions from established determinations by a Mechanism that we unanimously renewed, and an action, finally, to send a warning and a message of firmness against those who would consider breaking the taboo in the future. By putting off acting on the demand for justice to which we have collectively committed, abdicating our responsibility, would send an irresponsible signal of impunity, which we must avoid.

My country, which has long been engaged in the fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, cannot accept that. The international situation in which we find ourselves calls for our immediate and firm reaction. It is up to us to protect the chemical non-proliferation regime, and with it all non-proliferation regimes. That is a treasure we possess, for which we are responsible and of which we are the guardians.

We come late to this today. That is why France, together with its British and American partners, wanted to engage in good faith in a negotiation to bring together all the members of the Council around to the appropriate response. The result of our efforts has produced a balanced proposal aimed at punishing all the actors involved that is based on targeted measures.

First, the draft resolution (S/2017/172), which provides for the adoption of measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, identifies a violation of resolution 2118 (2013) and condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Secondly, it reaffirms the Council's conviction that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons must be prosecuted. Thirdly, it reiterates the need for the Syrian regime to comply with all its international obligations. Fourthly, it reaffirms all measures taken against Da'esh and the terrorist groups listed by the Council. Fifthly, it reiterates the measures specific to the sanctions regime. It establishes a sanctions committee, supported by a panel of experts. It establishes the appropriate criteria for listing entities and individuals responsible for the use of chemical weapons, in connection with which it includes a list of entities and individuals. And it establishes an embargo on sensitive chemicals and on weapons and materials that could be used to import dangerous chemical substances, as well as on helicopters.

An inability to act, as I said, would constitute a blameworthy move backward for the Council. Beyond our political divisions, we have in the past been able to mobilize in unison on non-proliferation issues. If today we are not able to discuss and agree on issues of such gravity, if we are not able to echo the collective consciousness of humankind, we will have failed in our responsibilities. Our credibility is at stake.

In the noisy clamour of our world, there are moments of truth when we can no longer dodge our responsibilities. This vote is that moment of truth, when our fundamental basic values, the law and our security are at stake. Values: who would not prosecute those who have killed innocent women and children in cold blood, in the most atrocious and reprehensible of conditions? That would be a negation of our entire civilization. The law: the Council has been unanimous in saying that we must prosecute those responsible for those murdered with chemical weapons. What are we waiting for in implementing laws that we ourselves have contributed to putting in place? Lastly, our security: if we close our eyes to the use of chemical weapons against civilians, what legitimacy will we have tomorrow to condemn nuclear terrorism or apocalyptic attacks using bacteriological agents? Who would be responsible before history?

At stake today are not tactical interests; at stake are the very fundamental values of our security. The world is watching and waiting on us. Let us rise to our responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations. Let us rise to ensure the power of the law in the service of the values of the United Nations and the interests of present and future generations. If for dubious reasons we do not succeed today, know that France will never give up.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The Security Council is about to be asked a simple question: Will we take action against those who use chemical weapons in Syria? It is that simple. Will we take action on behalf of those whose lives have been destroyed by these senseless weapons? Will we take action for people like Mohammed Abdul-Razzuk Alhashash? Thanks to the testimony of those on the ground, we know that Mohammed was admitted to hospital at 1.30 p.m. on 21 April 2014. A couple of hours earlier, a Syrian regime helicopter had dropped two containers on his home town of Talmenes, exposing him and many others to a yellow toxic gas.

After the attack, Mohammed was unable to breathe. He lost consciousness. On arrival at hospital he was intubated under mechanical ventilation. His face went red. Pink foam poured from his mouth. His pupils were dilated. His lungs were crackling. His heartbeat and breathing stopped. Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation was performed, but all attempts to revive him failed. Mohammad died at two o'clock. He was six years old.

Mohammed is why we are here today. We are here in the Chamber to begin to bring justice for him, for his family and for the hundreds, if not thousands, of other Syrians whose stories are all too similar to his own. This is not about politics. At its core this is not really about the Joint Investigative Mechanism or about the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons — respectively, the JIM and the OPCW, but forget the acronyms. This is not even about Syria. This is about taking a stand when children are poisoned. It is that simple. It is about taking a stand when civilians are maimed and murdered with toxic weapons — weapons used in complete disregard for the international rules and norms that we all claim to uphold.

Therefore, in a moment, when we are asked to vote on this draft resolution (S/2017/172), I hope that all members of the Council will lift their hands in favour of this text, and do so with Mohammed in their minds.

The President: The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

France, Italy, Japan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Uruguay

Against:

Bolivia (Plurinational State of), China, Russian Federation

Abstaining:

Egypt, Ethiopia, Kazakhstan

The President: There were 9 votes in favour, 3 against and 3 abstentions. The draft resolution has not been adopted, owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements following the voting.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): When members of the Security Council speak about the use of chemical weapons, it is pretty amazing because there is unity in the fact that we need to be concerned about chemical-weapon use in Syria and elsewhere. That is why the blocking of the draft resolution (S/2017/172) today is so troubling.

Russia and China made an outrageous and indefensible choice today. They refused to hold Bashar Al-Assad's regime accountable for the use of chemical weapons. They turned away from defenceless men, women and children who died gasping for breath when Al-Assad's forces dropped their poisonous gas. They ignored the facts. They put their friends in the Al-Assad regime ahead of our global security.

The Security Council banned the Al-Assad regime from holding onto any chemical weapons in 2013. Still, Al-Assad arrogantly continued to use these savage weapons. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons sent a fact-finding mission to Syria to investigate. The fact-finding mission confirmed that chemical weapons were used, but it lacked a mandate to say who was responsible, and therefore the Security Council unanimously agreed to set up the Joint Investigative Mechanism to answer this obvious question: If chemical-weapon attacks are happening in Syria, who is involved? At that time, everyone on the Security Council, including Russia and China, said that they wanted to know who used chemical weapons.

The question was answered. However, Russia and China did not like the answer. The investigators spent a year collecting mountains of evidence, speaking to witnesses and verifying testimony. The conclusion was, and remains, irrefutably clear: the Al-Assad regime used chemical weapons three times from 2014 to 2015,

and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) used chemical weapons once. Those are of course only the attacks that could be confirmed with limited time and resources. There are credible reports that Al-Assad used chemical weapons many more times. Amazingly, members are willing to condemn ISIL for the one incident, but turn a blind eye to the Member State Syria, which committed this crime at least three times.

Russia and China now say they have questions about the investigation. They sat through almost a year of briefings by the investigators and they never objected to their work. But now they suddenly say that the investigation was just not enough. Russia's suggestion is for the Al-Assad regime to investigate itself for use of chemical weapons. Are we going to have ISIL investigate itself too? There is nothing wrong with the investigation. Russia just does not want to criticize the Al-Assad regime for using chemical weapons. That is the truth.

What is the message we are sending to the world? China and Russia will cover the backs of their friends and allies who use chemical weapons to kill their own people. Some say we should focus more on ISIL. The United States condemns any use of chemical weapons — by ISIL or any other non-State actor. We are determined to defeat ISIL, and we will defeat ISIL. Its use of chemical weapons only adds to the urgency of doing that. But the barbarity of ISIL is no excuse for Al-Assad's own barbarity. Both used chemical weapons. Both should face the consequences.

Other Council members say the timing is not right for a resolution, or that we should delay the vote for the sake of Council unity. But let us remember: because the Al-Assad regime used chemical weapons, people died in one of the most brutal ways possible. We got confirmation of the Syrian regime's involvement. The question should not be whether to wait longer; the question should be why we have not acted sooner.

Let us step back from the Security Council. The reason we all should care about this draft resolution is that we want to make sure that no one ever thinks about using chemical weapons. Watch some of the videos online from the regime's chemical-weapon attacks in Syria. Watch the rows of parents and children lying on the ground suffocated to death. Watch Syrians gasping for breath in makeshift hospitals, desperate for oxygen to stop from gagging on chlorine. The suffering is inhumane. It is grotesque. It should shake every one of us to our core. None of us should hesitate to impose consequences for these attacks. No one else should get the idea that they can use chemical weapons.

Shamefully, today's draft resolution was not adopted. The names of people and companies involved in Al-Assad's use of chemical weapons are public — all listed in the annex of the draft resolution for everyone to see. The United States has already designated for sanctions every person and every entity listed in the annex. We will work with our European Union and other like-minded partners to push for similar sanctions as soon as possible. We will not forget the overwhelming suffering caused by Al-Assad's use of chemical weapons.

For my friends in Russia, this draft resolution is very appropriate. It is a sad day in the Security Council. When members start making excuses for other Member States killing their own people, the world is definitely a more dangerous place. Today the international community can look no further than the Security Council for contributing to that.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I am appalled that Russia vetoed today's draft resolution (S/2017/172), and I am surprised and disappointed that China chose to join it, at complete odds with the principles of non-proliferation that both China and Russia claim to support so strongly. As permanent members of the Security Council and as parties to the Chemical Weapons Convention, Russia and China have a clear responsibility to take action against the use and proliferation of chemical weapons. By vetoing the draft resolution today they have undermined the credibility of the Security Council and of the international rules preventing the use of these barbaric weapons.

In resolution 2118 (2013) we all agreed — Russia and China included — that any use of chemical weapons by anyone in the Syrian Arab Republic would lead to the Security Council imposing measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. Thanks to those vetoes today, we have failed to do so.

This was not a political text. It was a technical draft resolution in response to an impartial and factual report by the Security Council-mandated United Nations-Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). It was a report we all called for. It was an investigation we all supported.

But instead of backing the draft resolution, we have seen yet again that Russia is prepared to abuse its veto power to stand by a regime that has no regard for its own people, that has no regard for the basic rules of war or international treaties, a regime that has indiscriminately bombed and besieged its own people, a regime that has turned chemical weapons on its own population, killing 6-year-old children like Mohammad.

This is Russia's seventh veto on the subject of Syria in five years. What further evidence do we need that Russia will always prioritize the Al-Assad regime over the protection of the Syrian people? Today we have learned that they will plunge to new depths, that they would rather cover up for Al-Assad than prevent the further use and proliferation of chemical weapons.

The Russians will say that this draft resolution was based on weak or flawed evidence, but the JIM was a fully independent United Nations mechanism that Russia created. Russia agreed to the methodology that the JIM would apply, and yet when it came up with an answer that Russia did not like, all of a sudden there was a problem. Russia's answer is that Syria should conduct its own investigation. The idea that the guilty party should investigate itself is absurd, and it is clearly on record that the Syrian regime has obstructed the JIM investigation.

Russia will claim that the JIM does not meet a legal standard of evidence, but it was never intended to. As we all agreed, in resolution 2235 (2015), it was meant to examine the available evidence in an impartial manner and come to a conclusion. Russia will claim that we should be focusing on the use of chemical weapons by Da'esh. But we already have robust and comprehensive measures in place to combat Da'esh. Today's draft resolution would have reaffirmed our commitment to those measures and reiterated our condemnation of Da'esh. Russia will say that supporting this draft resolution would disrupt the Syrian political process. That is simply not true. The United Kingdom remains committed to working with Russia and everyone else, through the United Nations, to help the Syrian people reach a lasting political settlement. But not taking action against the use of chemical weapons undermines confidence in the international community's ability to tackle flagrant violations of international law. It undermines the confidence and trust of the ordinary Syrians affected by these horrific attacks, and that is no way to build the right conditions for successful political talks.

Despite Russia and China's actions, I would like to reiterate our thanks to the JIM for its work, and to the international partners who helped it. Because of that tireless work, we know without doubt that the Al-Assad regime and Da'esh used toxic chemicals as weapons against civilians in Syria. Those responsible for such attacks remain free and unpunished to this day. Today we had a chance to step up and begin to end that impunity. Instead, Russia and China have let down the people of Marea, Talmenes, Sarmin and Qmenas, and the wider international community that seeks justice for those horrific attacks. Without a clear response to those flagrant abuses of international law, the Al-Assad regime is only going to be emboldened to preserve its chemical weapon capabilities and continue to use them. We should all be concerned about the reports of further use of chemical weapons in Syria, most recently in Aleppo and eastern Hama last year.

In response to today's vetoes, Da'esh, too, will surely only be encouraged to continue using chemical weapons — something that Russia claims to oppose. And the longer-term credibility and utility of the Chemical Weapons Convention will also suffer. But the United Kingdom will not let Russia's actions today stop us from working with international partners to see justice done for the victims and to prevent the use of chemical weapons by anyone, anywhere. That includes the international, impartial and independent mechanism for Syria agreed on by the General Assembly last year. We must be able to demonstrate that the international system works and that we are able to bring those responsible for using chemical weapons to account. Anything less is not an option.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation voted against today's draft resolution (S/2017/172), on imposing sanctions Syria, because its authors' concept, which by its very nature is offensive and flawed, is totally unacceptable. The fact that the draft resolution failed to receive six Council members' votes out of 15 should give its authors serious reason to think. The statements we have heard have left us in no doubt that the draft resolution was based on the Western capitals' anti-regime doctrine. As for the insulting remarks about Russia, China and other States, we leave them to their consciences and may God be their judge. Let us try to sort out what really took place.

When the draft resolution first saw the light, at the beginning of December 2016, we expressed our concerns

on a number of occasions, collectively and separately, to each co-sponsor. Our scepticism about the conclusions of the third and fourth reports (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888) of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and the United Nations to investigate cases of the use of chemical weapons in Syria is well known. Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, late Permanent Representative of Russia, had already made detailed comments highlighting their uncorroborated conclusions, and at that point we thought we had made things quite clear. Apparently not. From the point of view of their practical legal application, the JIM's conclusions are not based on convincing facts on which any sort of charges could be founded. Moreover, they take no account of the fact that besides the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, there is widespread use of toxic substances in Syria by the Al-Nusra Front as well as numerous opposition groups on the ground, including for purposes of provocation aimed at discrediting the country's armed forces and its leadership.

The problem is that the work of the experts in Syria is based on questionable information provided by the armed opposition sympathetic international non-governmental organizations, the media and so-called friends of Syria. At the same time, the attitude to requests from Damascus about the investigations is one of shrugging contempt, as was clearly demonstrated in the report of the OPCW Fact-finding Mission on an incident that occurred on 2 August of last year in Aleppo. No wonder, when two thirds of the Mission's expert team was staffed by representatives from a single group of countries. Its geographic balance is in urgent need of correction. Let us be frank: the whole thing strengthens the impression that the authors of the draft text submitted for a vote today needed the Joint Investigative Mechanism for the sole purpose of laying responsibility for the use of chemical weapons at the door of Al-Assad's Government, thereby creating additional reasons for regime change in Damascus. We should once again emphasize that this obsession with that destructive geopolitical project continues to be an obstacle to the ability to think clearly and weigh decisions carefully with the goal of reaching a political settlement, not just in Syria but in a number of other trouble spots in the Middle East.

When we created the JIM and agreed to extend its work for another year, it was on the clear understanding of the nature of the threat posed to this troubled region by the use of chemical weapons by terrorist organizations. Today that dangerous trend threatens to spill beyond the borders of the Middle East. We were led by the expectation that the Mechanism's work would be founded on a basis of impartiality and on established facts, not assumptions, conjectures or fabrications. In that regard, the Mechanism needs to seriously rethink the principles behind its work. We believe that, as envisaged in resolution 2319 (2016), the Mechanism's activities will go beyond Syria to include its neighbouring countries, and that its mandate will provide for real counter-terrorism measures. Much remains to be clarified in that regard, including enabling Damascus, in accordance with its obligations under article VII of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), to appropriately conclude a comprehensive national investigation verifying the facts laid out in the JIM's reports. What is there to say about a situation when the investigators did not actually travel to the places where the crimes were alleged to have been committed?

Based on the unconvincing findings of the JIM's reports in today's draft resolution, there is no justification for concluding that Damascus has failed to comply with the Chemical Weapons Convention or has violated resolution 2118 (2013), despite the fact that resolution 2118 (2013) was seen as a huge success for the Security Council in its unprecedented disarming of Syria's chemical weapons. The draft resolution envisages applying sanctions similar to those that have been imposed on other countries. Working from this type of carbon copy is totally unacceptable. The authors of the draft resolution have gone as far as to propose financial, economic and other restrictions on specific individuals and legal entities.

However, they do not bother to provide justification for the establishment of sanctions lists. The JIM has not spoken about any Syrian officials, scientific institutions or economic entities. This is a clear attempt to prejudge the outcomes of the investigations. When agreeing upon this draft resolution, we were told that it served the goal of non-proliferation. However, if one reads this voluminous document, it becomes absolutely clear that the point is to levy sanctions against Damascus, under imagined pretexts.

We are seeing a clear trend of bringing powerful political pressure to bear on the Mechanism and pre-programming the results of the investigation. The Mechanism is being forced to set aside the principles of objectivity, independence and impartiality, which were

set forth in the resolution tht established it. No lessons have been learned from the past. I recall the tragedy that occurred as a result of the pressure brought to bear on the Special Commission on Iraq, and then on the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission. It seems the Council has forgotten that this marked the very beginning of destabilization in the Middle East. We have no right to repeat such a thing.

The annex of the draft resolution refers to a ban on the provision to Syria of a large number of chemical substances, the majority of which have nothing to do with the CWC. An embargo on the exports of this country can adversely affect the fulfilment of major agricultural and economic needs, in particular given that there are already unilateral sanctions in place. A ban on the provision of helicopters, spare parts and services could indeed be seen as an attempt to undermine the counter-terrorism efforts being undertaken by Damascus, not to mention the critical role played by small aircraft in resolving humanitarian issues in an armed conflict.

We truly wonder against whom and to what end this draft resolution has been crafted. It lay on the shelves for three months and underwent no significant change despite our numerous observations and the alternative we proposed on how joint work could be organized to combat chemical terrorism in the region. Nevertheless, the draft resolution was brought to the Security Council for a vote in the context of the efforts undertaken in Geneva and Astana to establish an intra-Syrian political dialogue to settle the crisis. This is a railroading of the draft by the Western troika of permanent Security Council members. We see this as an attempt to retard and undermine current political and diplomatic efforts. We have seen the same scenario before. They say one thing and then do something completely different. The sponsors were unable to recognize the inappropriateness and untimeliness of measures; nor were they able to recognize the real threat of chemical terrorism in the Middle East. They do not understand that unilateral and multilateral sanctions against Damascus will only weaken the international counter-terrorism effort.

In spite of our consistent appeals, the sponsors preferred a politically biased approach, leading to confrontation and an exacerbation of the situation, including in the Security Council. They heated things up intentionally, well aware that the initiative had no chance of being adopted in the Security Council. In that context, we had no other choice than to block this draft resolution. The sanctions list contained therein was taken from analogous American lists approved at the beginning of this year by the outgoing United States Administration. One should not turn it all around, get it all backwards, create virtual pictures. Today's confrontation is not a result of our negative vote, it is a result of the fact that the sponsors opted for provocation, all the while knowing our position.

Furthermore, we would like to underscore that, in voting against this draft resolution, we voted against confrontation. By doing so, we demonstrated that confrontation is doomed to failure. It should be a thing of the past. We are sending a message: only through cooperation will we be able to resolve the most difficult of tasks and move forward in finding a solution to the Syrian crisis. It is high time that we do so by creating a broad counter-terrorism front.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan supported and co-sponsored the draft resolution (S/2017/172) proposed by France, the United Kingdom and the United States. We firmly believe that the Security Council needs to show its shared determination that the use of chemical weapons is not permissible under any circumstances, and that the Council will hold accountable those who are responsible.

Acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, in resolution 2118 (2013) we as a Council decided to impose measures in the event of any use of chemical weapons in Syria by anyone. This is the starting point. Then the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) was established and its mandate renewed unanimously. The JIM drew conclusions from its impartial, objective and independent investigation. In the view of Japan, it is our primary responsibility to implement what we have decided as a Council. Regrettably, today the proposed draft resolution was not adopted. However, I believe and hope there is unity inside the Council on the necessity to hold accountable those who are responsible for the use of chemical weapons. The Council needs to continue to explore ensuring accountability.

As for the issue of timing, we heard an argument that this moment is not opportune in the light of the political process in Geneva. There is no question about the Council's unanimous support for the political process led by the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, Mr. Staffan de Mistura. However, it is not a question of whether the timing is good or not for

the Council to take measures to ensure accountability for the use of chemical weapons.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a signatory to the code of conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, Uruguay is committed to preventing and putting an end to such horrendous crimes. In that regard, we can only lament the use of the veto in the case of this draft resolution (S/2017/172). My delegation believes that ensuring accountability for the use of chemical weapons in Syria is essential, not only for reasons of justice but also to put an end to and prevent such heinous acts.

It was not a perfect text, but it did constitute a first step towards ensuring accountability for the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian conflict, based on the conclusions of the third and fourth reports (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888) of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, which established responsibility for four out of nine alleged cases of use investigated. The sanctions regime that we were prepared to implement, like other Council sanctions regimes in force, could subsequently have been reviewed and improved upon by the panel of experts that would have been established for that purpose.

We reiterate that these crimes must not go unpunished, whether committed by the members of the Government, the Syrian armed forces, terrorist groups or non-State armed groups. We call on all members of the Council to continue to seek consensus that would allow us, as soon as possible, to adopt measures to punish those responsible, and therefore to prevent new incidents of chemical-weapon use against the already hard-hit civilian population of Syria.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Thanks to the joint efforts by the international community, the ceasefire in Syria has been generally preserved recently. A new round of Geneva peace talks is under way. A rare opportunity has emerged in terms of finding a political solution to the question of Syria. Under the current circumstances, the international community should remain committed to a political solution, consolidate the positive momentum through coordinated actions and encourage the parties in Syria to maintain the ceasefire and dialogue so as to find a way out that is acceptable to all the parties as soon as possible.

The Security Council's action on the question of Syria should take into account the importance of maintaining the ceasefire, finding a political solution, working together to counter terrorism and providing humanitarian assistance. That should be in the interest of stabilizing the situation in Syria as soon as possible. Anyone truly interested in the fundamental interests of the people of Syria and the Middle East would do nothing that ran counter to such interests. Regardless of the rhetoric and no matter how elegant it might sound, anything that runs counter to the fundamental interests of the people of Syria and the region should not be allowed by the Council.

China's position on the issue of chemical weapons is clear and consistent: we oppose the use of chemical weapons by any State, organization or individual under any circumstances, and call for punishing all instances of chemical weapons use. China has itself been a victim of the use of chemical weapons by other States. The Chinese people are more justified than any other party to express their opposition to the use of chemical weapons. China is deeply concerned about and strongly condemns the use of chemical as weapons that has occurred within Syria.

With regard to the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the Council has in the past achieved important results in terms of destroying the stockpile of chemical weapons in Syria. At present, investigations on the use of chemicals as weapons are ongoing, and it is therefore too early to reach a final conclusion. The Council should preserve its unity and continue to support the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism so that it can carry out its investigations in a professional matter, based on objective and fair criteria and in accordance with the mandate that was conferred to it by resolution 2319 (2016). Relevant conclusions must be based on accurate, detailed and solid evidence that can truly stand the test of history.

As we all recall, the purported existence of weapons of mass destruction was used in the past to unleash a war that has brought untold suffering to the people in the Middle East. Countries in the Middle East remain beset today by the legacy of that war. The lessons of history must be learned. Only in that way can mistakes be avoided in the future.

The draft resolution (S/2017/172) is based on conclusions on which the parties continue to have differences. It was forced through to a vote, although Council members still had serious differences. That is

in no way helpful to finding a solution to the issue of chemical weapons in Syria, and it is not conducive to the peace talks in Geneva and the political process on the question of Syria in general.

China has been working tirelessly to help bring about a solution to the issue of Syria, supports the United Nations as the major player in terms of good offices and has been facilitating finding a settlement among the parties that is acceptable to all through peaceful negotiations and based on the principle of a Syrian-owned and -led process. China will continue to play a constructive role in finding a political solution to this issue with a view to arriving at a comprehensive, fair and appropriate solution to the question of Syria.

I would also like to take this opportunity to point out that the Security Council is the core of our collective security regime. Every Council member bears the sacred responsibility of maintaining international peace and security and should define its national position in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and on the merits of the case under discussion. Unprovoked and distorted attacks against the solemn position of other members represent a very irresponsible action. In the words of the representative of the United Kingdom, it is really absurd. In and of itself, that serves as a good example of how certain countries are using rhetoric as a means of last resort and with ulterior motives.

What all Council members should do is deeply reflect on the situation in Syria and the Middle East, on how it has been allowed to deteriorate to its current level, and on the role that each and everyone of us has played — and on whether that role should or should not be praised. It is only by doing so that we can be regarded as acting responsibly with regard to the people of Syria and the region. Dealing with people solely through rhetorical flourishes is complete hypocrisy.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): As a sponsor that voted in favour of today's draft resolution (S/2017/172), Italy regrets that the Security Council was unable to adopt the text submitted by France, the United Kingdom and the United States. We thank those delegations for their efforts.

Of course, we had hoped that the unity of the Council would be preserved in support of the draft resolution, and my delegation had worked in that direction during negotiations and consultations. The initiative is about ensuring a meaningful follow-up to the reports of an impartial instrument that the Council established, supported and renewed unanimously, thereby clearly backing its methodology, professionalism and impartiality. Looking ahead, we are encouraged that the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) is about to resume its activities. We remain strongly committed to supporting it and upholding the findings of its future. Investigations. Italy voted in favour of the draft resolution for three main reasons.

First, in the light of our long-standing position on non-proliferation issues, which must be kept separate from other more political considerations, we strongly condemn the use of any chemical weapon or toxic chemical anywhere, by anyone and under any circumstance, whether by State or non-State actors. Today more than ever, we must uphold the values and principles of international law and of the international non-proliferation regime and avoid its weakening, which would encourage anyone willing to resort to a barbaric form of warfare and aggression.

Secondly, we voted in favour of the draft resolution to show our credibility and the deterrence role of the JIM. We continue to support the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism and its staff, whom we commend for their dedication and professionalism. It is an essential instrument in attributing responsibility for such heinous attacks. The Council established the JIM because it felt the need to see the responsibility for chemical-weapon attacks attributed to those behind such horrific attacks. As its reports indicate, the JIM has done just what the Council had asked it to do, while abiding by the standards that the Security Council had set out. Its task was to identify to greatest extent feasible those who were perpetrators of chemical-weapon attacks. Today's draft resolution was meant to ensure meaningful follow-up to work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

The third, and final, reason that we voted in favour relates to accountability. Simply identifying which party is responsible is not enoug; those who planned, ordered and executed the attacks must face justice. The Council has a shared responsibility to uphold the work of the JIM and ensure meaningful follow-up in terms of holding individuals and/or entities accountable for their unacceptable and criminal acts.

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia reiterates its strongest and

most absolute condemnation and rejection of the use of chemical weapons and toxic substances, regardless of who uses them or their reasons for doing so or where such acts are perpetrated. Those responsible must be duly investigated, tried and punished to the fullest extent. The use of chemical weapons violates obligations under international law.

Bolivia voted against the draft resolution (S/2017/172) put forward today, which proposed a sanctions mechanism on the Government of Syria for using chemical weapons. Moreover, however, the draft resolution included an annex with a list of people and companies subject to the sanctions. None of the lists annexed to the draft resolution was compiled by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, which was established to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The names of the people and companies mentioned in the draft resolution did not come from the Panel of Experts of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. That list therefore violates the right to due process. A few years ago, in this very Chamber, so-called proof of weapons of mass destruction was found in that same region of the world. That ended with a country being invaded and left approximately 1 million people dead. Allow us, therefore, to challenge the information presented to us in today's draft resolution.

In the same vein, we believe that it is important that the Joint Investigative Mechanism be given more time to complete its work. We hope that its future reports will be completed with the highest level of transparency and political independence and that they can shed more light on developments.

It is also important to point out that the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), which we chair, is a body that addresses the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and chemical, biological and nuclear weapons by non-State actors. In that regard, its work is in no way related to the issue of imposing sanctions on Syria. Its focus is on ensuring that groups such as Islamic State do not possess such weapons.

We believe that those reasons were enough to vote against the draft resolution. I nevertheless believe that it is the Security Council's duty to look at the political context and situation above and beyond the contents the draft resolution. Bolivia has paid great attention to the comments made by Special Envoy of the Secretary-General Staffan de Mistura, who stated that the region's current ceasefire, which has indisputably led to a considerable reduction in violence, is one of the few remaining glimmers of hope for a political process and a path to peace in Syria.

At the same time, we believe that these types of initiatives — which, I reiterate, are not based on sufficient concrete facts or on the outcome of full, independent, impartial and conclusive investigations — threaten the ceasefire and, much more important, threaten the peace process being conducted under the auspices of the United Nations.

In that regard, we believe that it is important to ask ourselves why this type of draft resolution was presented to the Council when everyone knew that it would be vetoed. Why were more extensive negotiations not conducted to ensure that members of the Council could participate fully and contribute to the text of the draft resolution? What are the reasons for insisting that the draft resolution be put before the Council — to be vetoed, might I add, once again? The most logical answer that we can find to those questions is that the draft resolution presented today was simply an attempt to use the Security Council for political purposes. The goal was not to seek peace in Syria or to independently and objectively identify those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in the region; rather, it was to launch a political media offensive on members of the Council that voted against the draft resolution.

We believe that it is important to highlight that there were three abstentions and three votes against the draft resolution. We believe that that sends a very strong signal that, unfortunately, when faced with such types of draft resolutions, things are not functioning as they should in the Council.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): We are all aware of the magnitude of the crisis that the Syrian people have been facing under the yoke of a conflict that has now entered its seventh year. The conflict has claimed hundreds of thousands of victims and left millions displaced. We all know that achieving swift justice is an integral part of the efforts to reach a final settlement and to put an end to the suffering of Syrians, reuniting them under the flag of a country with control over its territory and that fulfils the hopes its people have for freedom and democracy.

That is why Egypt has advocated, and will always advocate, the notion of accountability in Syria in order

to achieve justice, in particular with regard to crimes that could be considered war crimes, regardless of their perpetrators, and to instances in which it has been proven that chemical weapons have been used against Syrian civilians by more than one party, as stated in the report of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, established pursuant to resolution 2235 (2015). The mandate of the Mechanism was renewed by resolution 2319 (2016).

The application of the notion of accountability, in Syria or elsewhere, means having a number of elements in place. If one or more of those elements is absent, such accountability would become a politicized measure that would end up deepening the crisis in Syria and having an adverse effect on the prospects for the political process. Despite the fact that the draft resolution (S/2017/172) put before the Security Council today purports to ensure accountability and achieve justice, for unknown reasons it ignores one of the main elements that I have mentioned, that is, evidence.// Let me remind Council members ....

Let me remind Council members that the common practice when introducing sanctions against individuals or entities implicated in specific crimes as serious as those we consider today is to establish a sanctions committee through a Security Council resolution. Such a committee would evaluate the evidence provided in connection with the individuals or entities accused of using chemical weapons. The names of those entities or individuals would then be included on the sanctions list. Those steps are aimed at guaranteeing the transparency of justice.

What we have before us today is supposedly not a political measure to impose sanctions on a given country, but rather accountability for explicit accusations against individuals because of their implication in clear crimes. Nevertheless, we are surprised that those usual steps have been skipped. The proposed draft resolution includes in its annexes a pre-identified list of individuals and entities that would be subject to those sanctions and whom the co-sponsors perceive to be primarily responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

We see that as a premature judgment of the reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, which has not levelled any accusations against the individuals and entities whose names are included on the annexed list. The co-sponsors of the draft resolution have also not provided any evidence whatsoever of that culpability, nor have they deferred to any sanctions committee, which, according to the very same draft resolution, ought to be established to verify such serious accusations. Such actions run counter to the basic notions of transparency concerning information and its sources, on the basis of which names have been included on the annexed list.

We have also noted that the draft resolution conflates two notions that very clearly are different. We understand, however, as we all support the imposition of sanctions against those who have been established to be implicated in the heinous crime of using chemical weapons. Nevertheless, the draft resolution went far beyond by imposing the same sanctions on a matter that is perceived by many as being very technical: the relationship between the Government of Syria and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and the assessment of the credibility of the preliminary Syrian declaration on its chemical-weapon programme.

Over the past couple of months, we have repeatedly explained our viewpoint regarding the imbalance in the draft resolution that supposedly seeks to establish justice, particularly as it relates to the lack of evidence. Despite our repeated readiness to support Council sanctions on those responsible for the use of chemical weapons, through the standard procedures we have identified, in the interest of ensuring full justice, we were surprised to see an incomprehensible insistence on proceeding with the draft resolution without any modifications to address such imbalances. That is why we were compelled to abstain in the voting on the draft resolution today — in order to express that we support the notion of justice and accountability in general but, at the same time, oppose the levelling of arbitrary accusations against specific individuals and entities on issues that could amount to being war crimes.

In conclusion, allow me to express our regret that the proposed draft resolution gives the perception that the Security Council is divided when it comes to the danger of chemical weapons in Syria. That particular subject has always enjoyed consensus in the Council since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), on the Syrian chemical-weapon programme. I would also note our surprise that we must take such a step, but all members know that the draft resolution is doomed to fail. Such failure could negatively impact the momentum in the political process and the prospects for achieving justice and accountability in Syria in the future.

We therefore call on all the members of the Council to get back to work as soon as possible in order to restore mutual trust among members in order to support the political process in Syria and avoid any indifference and political convenience, which do not always convey the real situation in Syria and will lead only to negative consequences in that country. We also call on the international community to give due importance to the establishment of a region free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East by following a comprehensive approach, and to engage actively in addressing the risk of non-State actors using and manufacturing such weapons, and sharing that knowledge with one another.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): At the outset, let me make it very clear that we have a firm and uncompromising policy against the use of chemical weapons, born of our own experience. We have no reason for laxity on that issue. We believe that the use of chemical weapons, for any reason and under any circumstances by any party, is not only abhorrent but also violates international law. That is why we condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the use of chemical weapons in Syria, as reported by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact-Finding Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic. We believe that those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria, whether State or non-State actors, whether individuals or entities, should be identified based on conclusive findings and must be held accountable. That is why we attach great importance to the work of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

Since we joined the Security Council, we have been carefully examining the draft resolution (S/2017/172) on the use of chemical weapons in Syria with a great sense of responsibility. In that connection, we have been very frank and open in raising questions on the third and fourth reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism (see S/2016/738/Rev.1 and S/2016/888), which the draft resolution used as a basis for proposing a sanctions regime. We came to realize that, due to a number of constraints, the Joint Investigative Mechanism could not find "highly convincing evidence", "substantial evidence" or even "sufficient evidence". As the Joint Investigative Mechanism made clear in its report, what it was able to find was only "sufficient information" — and I want to underline that. Of course, we understand the JIM's real constraints. It was not under ideal circumstances that it was called upon to undertake that onerous task.

Therefore, when we affirm that its current conclusions are not yet firm enough to make the kind of decision proposed, it is not intended to cast aspersions on the work done by the JIM, which, in our judgment, was carried out with objectivity and a high level of professional responsibility. We nonetheless believe that we have the obligation to point out areas that are in need of further clarification and investigation to determine the specific individuals and entities responsible for those acts. That is to say that we are only stressing that making a decision on a very vital matter, such that which had been proposed attributing responsibility for the use of chemical weapons, should have been based on convincing and robust evidence. Whoever is responsible for such abhorrent acts must be explicitly identified and accordingly punished. That requires establishing clear and unambiguous evidence. Thus far, the JIM has not come up with a specific and detailed list of persons or entities that fully corresponds to the annex of the draft resolution.

In resolution 2319 (2016), the Council renewed the mandate of the JIM for one additional year. As we heard just this past Friday from the Head of JIM, Ms. Virginia Gamba, a new investigative team with better skills has been formed and is ready "to examine additional information and evidence that was not obtained or prepared by the Fact-Finding Mission". It would have been only appropriate and logical to allow the JIM to continue its work and come up with an unambiguous conclusion. That, we thought, would have contributed to ensuring the unity of the Council, which is critical with regard to very weighty issues such as the one at hand.

I should say parenthetically that one of the most successful arms control agreements was concluded in September 2013 with the aim of removing or destroying Syria's chemical weapons. By comparison, we feel that it would have been much easier to move together this time around. Nevertheless, we remain fully confident with regard to the work of the JIM. We understand that it has not received the necessary support commensurate with the unprecedented responsibility given to it by the Council. We believe that, as it resumes its important work, it is absolutely important to provide all the necessary support to the JIM and protect its professional independence. It is also vital that we use the important work of the JIM and the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission

in the Syrian Arab Republic to address the proliferation of chemical weapons in Syria, the magnitude of which experts tell us is indeed downright scary, with the potential to affect and endanger the wider region. Criminal groups are having a field day in that regard. We need to get our act together before it is too late, as happens on too many occasions.

Finally, the Syrian people have been going through unspeakable suffering and pain over the past six years. I should like to therefore conclude by once again expressing our support for ongoing Syria peace talks in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations, which, we believe, should be the most important focus of the Council to end the suffering of the Syrian people.

Mr. Tumysh (Kazakhstan): Kazakhstan has always opposed the use of chemical weapons, as well as any other kind of weapon of mass destruction. In that regard, we consider the facts pertaining to the use of chemical weapons in Syria to indicate a flagrant and inhuman act that cannot be justified. Given the extreme importance of the complete and immediate cessation of the use of chemical weapons and bringing the perpetrators to justice, we stand for the unanimous adoption of measures that would truly lead us to the cessation of the use of chemical weapons in Syria and the ultimate goal of ending the bloodshed. Today's meeting, however, shows the inability of the Security Council to adopt a coherent and mutually acceptable solution on this important issue, which will prolong the suffering of the Syrian people and is not conducive to resolving the crisis in that long-suffering nation.

The issue requires a coherent, balanced and meaningful approach. We believe that we cannot place responsibility on only one side of the conflict for the use of chemical weapons and that it is fundamentally important to make concrete punitive decisions only on the basis of strong, clear and irrefutable evidence with clear facts and complete conclusions. It is therefore necessary to continue the work of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, and we fully support it.

Finally, given the aforementioned and the fact that the lack of consensus on the draft resolution exacerbates the situation in Syria and is not conducive to strengthening the Security Council's efforts in the pursuit of peace and security, my delegation abstained in the voting.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Until today, the Security Council had stood united in its demand on all parties to refrain from the use of chemical weapons in Syria. The Council has consistently confirmed that the use and proliferation of such weapons of mass destruction constitute a threat to international peace and security. With the adoption of resolution 2209 (2015), the Council committed itself to holding those responsible for any use of chemicals as weapons in Syria, including chlorine and other toxic chemicals, to account. The Council has thus far failed to deliver on that commitment and respond to the conclusions the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM).

The conclusive findings of the JIM are clear. The Syrian Armed Forces have used chemical weapons on at least three occasions, and the terrorist group Da'esh has used mustard gas at least once. The Council cannot remain passive in the face of confirmed non-compliance with its own numerous resolutions and the first confirmed case of non-compliance by a State party to the Chemical Weapons Convention. To demand accountability is not politicization but our common responsibility. That the Council was not able to honour its commitments owing to the use of the right to veto of two of its permanent members is indeed deplorable.

Sweden condemns in the strongest terms all use of chemical weapons in Syria and elsewhere and will continue to do so. We trust that the Council will be able to once again show a united front against such international crimes. The Council's work to ensure accountability for chemical weapons used in Syria does not stop here. We strongly support the JIM's continued efforts to reach independent and technically underpinned conclusions with regard to the perpetrators of chemical weapons use in Syria.

Sweden will be making a voluntary contribution of approximately $220,000 in response to the appeal of the fifth JIM report (see S/2017/131), and we look forward to future JIM reports. We will continue to work with all members towards helping the Council to assume its responsibility again. We owe that to all of those who have suffered the inhumane consequences of toxic chemicals used as weapons. It must be clear that there will be no impunity for those crimes.

In conclusion, over the past six years the Council has been divided on too many occasions on how to end to the conflict and the needless human suffering in

Syria. We fully support the ongoing United Nations-led talks in Geneva. A renewed process geared towards lasting peace in Syria is our joint responsibility.

Mr. Seck (Senegal): (*spoke in French*): Senegal would like to take its turn in recalling that nothing can or must be used to justify something as horrific as the use of chemicals as weapons, including during conflicts and against civilians who undergo unspeakable suffering as a consequence.

The draft resolution that was voted on today (S/2017/172) begins by recalling the Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare. It also recalls the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC). And I wish to stress the words "stockpiling" and "use".

In 2013, when Senegal was not yet a member, the Council, by resolution 2118 (2013), welcomed the decision of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to send a fact-finding mission to investigate the use of chemical weapons in Syria. Two years later in 2015, at which time Senegal was still not yet a member of the Council, the latter, by resolution 2235 (2015), created the OPCW-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), which built on the work of the Fact-Finding Mission to, among other objectives, identify the persons, entities or groups that had perpetrated, organized, ordered or in some way participated in the use as weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic of such substances as chlorine gas or other toxic chemicals.

These are the reasons why Senegal, which remains faithful to its position of principle and is a party to the CWC, voted in favour of the draft resolution that was submitted today. Having said that, given the three votes against, the three abstentions and the nine votes in favour, the Council can only accept that the draft resolution did not enjoy consensus. Therefore, after the encouraging dialogue in Astana, it is essential during the talks in Geneva that the Council support the JIM, in which we have placed our renewed trust. Those who used chemical weapons — and they were indeed used — must be brought to account. The Council must show unity to ensure that justice is done and in order to finally resolve the ongoing Syrian crisis, which has gone on for far too long.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): France deeply regrets the inability of the Security Council to adopt draft resolution S/2017/172 in spite of the support of the majority of members. The draft resolution was subject to far-reaching discussions in good faith with our partners. Thanks to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM), we had enough information to take the necessary measures. We had everything necessary to shoulder our responsibility, to which we were unanimously committed. We are therefore disappointed by the voting, of course, but certainly not discouraged. We do not have the right to be discouraged. We do not have the right to turn our backs and give up. We do not have the right to resign ourselves to the unthinkable — accepting the use of weapons of mass destruction without reacting with the necessary firmness.

That is why France, as underscored by Minister of Foreign Affairs Jean-Marc Ayrault, will not give up. The work of the JIM will continue. Other cases will be transferred to it and we will once again be required to take a position. Sooner or later, the perpetrators will be held to account. My country will remain fully mobilized with its partners. France is therefore more determined than ever to break the stalemate by drawing upon all appropriate international institutions to ensure these crimes are punished. I hope that when the time comes we will be able to come together. Our most fundamental values, as is our security and that of our children, are at stake. And all these things are simply far too important.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Ukraine.

We are disappointed by the results of the voting on the draft resolution on chemical weapons use in Syria (S/2017/172). Ukraine co-sponsored and voted in favour of the draft resolution and, in that regard, I wish to reiterate some elements of our position on the subject.

Against the background of increasing challenges and threats to international peace and security, Ukraine advocates strict adherence to the provisions of key international instruments in this field, including the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (CWC) and the 1925 Geneva Protocol. The use of chemical weapons in Syria, confirmed in the reports of the Organization for the

Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism, is a blatant violation of international law, and all responsible for such crimes should be brought to justice.

Ukraine therefore supports the introduction of further restrictive measures by the Council, under the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, in response to the violation of the CWC and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). The inability of the Council to address breaches of the Convention will lead to further impunity and is a matter of grave concern to my delegation.

Despite the results of the voting, I commend the efforts of those delegations involved in the preparation of the draft resolution, which sought to impose new, targeted, sectoral sanctions against the Syrian regime for the use of toxic chemicals as weapons, and to redouble international efforts to prevent the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant from using chemical weapons in future. The ongoing firm stance of those delegations in defending and restoring respect for international law is indispensable and will not be in vain. Let us remain mobilized. The time for justice will come.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Mounzer (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): First, I would like to express our most heartfelt condolences on the passing of Mr. Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, a friendly State. We will always remember him and his positive spirit and wisdom, which we feel in every room of the Organization. May he rest in peace.

We are not at all surprised to see that the triangle, composed of the United Kingdom, the United States and France, continues to pursue the same politicized and dangerous practices within the Security Council in order to undermine the Government of my country and subject us and our allies to the worst forms of blackmail. They are ready to put to the vote draft resolutions that draw from unprofessional reports that are unable to come to definitive conclusions and that draw on the false, fabricated eyewitness accounts of members of terrorist groups that are supported by those very same countries.

We know that the majority of these terrorists reside in Turkey, the first country to support terrorism in Syria. It is no secret that draft resolution S/2017/172 is based on reports written under unprecedented pressure. It is our impression that the missions that draft such reports do so before having even begun their work.

The Syrian Arab Republic's position remains unchanged with respect to chemical weapons and weapons of mass destruction. We are against the use of such weapons; they are unacceptable and deeply unethical. That is why my country acceded to the Chemical Weapons Convention, with a view to making the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction.

However, despite all of our efforts, it is clear today that the three States concerned proposed the draft resolution (S/2017/172) simply so as to protect Israel's nuclear, chemical and biological stockpiles. My country's Government has on numerous occasions warned about the threat posed by the use by armed terrorists of such chemical weapons against civilians, in particular groups affiliated with Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and Al-Qaida. We have addressed 87 letters to the Security Council, I repeat, 87 letters. We have also communicated with the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and with the highest disarmament authorities, as well as the Joint Investigative Mechanism. We also contacted the Counter-Terrorism Committee and provided corroborated information regarding the use, with the support of certain Governments, of toxic chemical substances by terrorist armed groups against civilians.

Unfortunately, these issues were not discussed or even considered. We know that there were intentional attempts to ignore our efforts, and that some of these chemical substances have been burned on board vessels, in particular United Kingdom and United States ones.

Now, what are we to do given the insistence of those three countries on putting the draft resolution to the vote? Our Government has repeatedly denied having using such chemical weapons, in particular chlorine. Our Government has tried to be as transparent as possible and has cooperated fully with all of the commissions and international missions that have come to us since 2014. We have facilitated their work so as to ensure that they could successfully conduct credible investigations. What we saw is that terrorist groups

have fabricated certain so-called testimony regarding the use of such chemical weapons.

My country deplores the fact that some Council members are trying to use for political ends the reports of various United Nations mechanisms. No logical or scientific consideration has been given to these reports, which should be read on the basis of the strictest criteria, including legal and scientific criteria. We have seen that the Joint Investigative Mechanism itself is not complying with the tools and methods of work that had been set out for it since the very beginning. There is no specific, precise or objective proof regarding the use of chlorine in particular. We can see, therefore, that the Mechanism has worked in a deplorable manner and lacks professionalism, and that it has failed to comply with the strictest criteria laid down by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

Here I would cite a few examples. In some of the Mechanism's reports, it is stated that the Mechanism will draw upon credible, corroborated evidence. It is supposed to specify in each case when the weapons were used, the date, the time, the climate, the temperature, the type of weapon used, the nature of the damage incurred and the ensuing medical impact. However, the mechanism drew upon eyewitness accounts that lack all of these elements. We also note that some of the evidence was moved to one location to another by armed terrorist groups and that the Mechanism was unable to analyse these practices, which are of course aimed at manipulating the readers of such reports and masking the truth.

Allow me, therefore, to put a very simple question to the Council and to ask it to respond transparently. The question, obviously, is not being posed to the representatives of France, the United Kingdom or the United States, because these States have chosen to obscure reality and to further certain agendas. My question is the following: what is the point of using chemical weapons against a limited number of armed persons when conventional weapons could have achieved the same results without needing to resort to chemical weapons? Why did we not use chemical weapons when terrorist groups attacked airports, large cities or military bases in numerous areas of Syria? My answer is very simple. Syria would never have used such weapons; it does not believe in such weapons as they are simply unethical.

The three States concerned attempted to submit the draft resolution to the Security Council, although it runs counter to all ethical principles. They are not interested in Syria or in the suffering of the Syrian people. Instead of supporting and endorsing the political process that is under way today in Geneva, they prefer to erect all possible obstacles in the way of a political solution to the conflict.

My country's Government denies all of the accusations made in the reports of the Joint Investigative Mechanism. We remain committed to all of our obligations, including those stemming from the Chemical Weapons Convention.

Finally, on behalf of my country, I would like to thank the friendly delegations that voted against the draft resolution, the Russian Federation, China and Bolivia, as well as the States that abstained, that is, Egypt, Ethiopia and Kazakhstan. I thank all of those States for upholding international law and the principles of the United Nations, because they know that all of this can undermine the credibility of our international efforts and threaten international peace and security by compounding the suffering of our peoples.

The President: Before adjourning the meeting, as this is the last scheduled meeting of the Council for the month of February, I should like to express the sincere appreciation of the delegation of Ukraine to the members of the Council, especially my colleagues the Permanent Representatives and their respective staff, as well as the secretariat of the Council for all the support that they have given to us.

It has been a busy month indeed and one in which we rallied to consensus on several important issues within our purview. We could not have done it alone or without the hard work, support and positive contributions of every delegation and the representatives of the Secretariat, as well as all relevant Conference Services officers and interpreters.

As we end our presidency, I know that I speak on behalf of the Council in wishing the delegation of the United Kingdom good luck in the month of March.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.